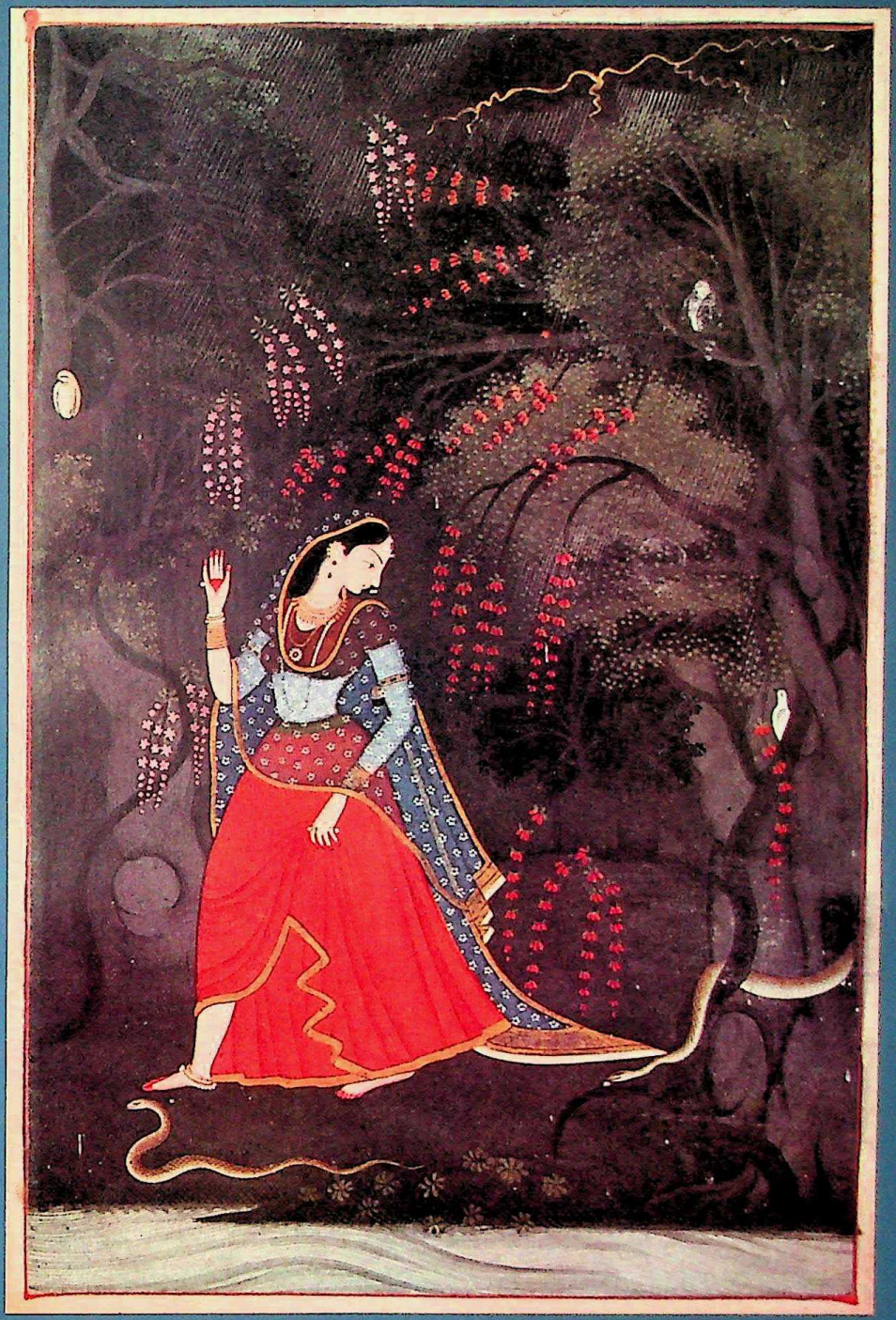
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

A-1
74

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

The Faber Gallery of Oriental Art



A1 74

GARHWAL PAINTING

with an introduction and notes by

W. G. ARCHER

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

THE FABER GALLERY OF ORIENTAL ART

General Editor:
BASIL GRAY
Keeper of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum

GARHWAL PAINTING

With an Introduction and Notes
by W. G. Archer

The art of the Punjab Hill State of Garhwal is an entrancing parallel to that of Kangra. Developing in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, it exhibits the same preoccupation with courtly needs, the same delicate refinements and the same blending of poetry and romance. The work of its greatest master represents perhaps the highest level of poetic expression reached in eighteenth-century Indian painting.

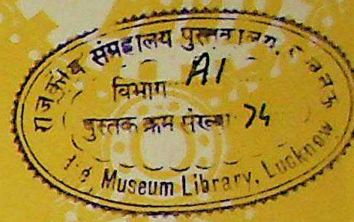
In this monograph, Mr. W. G. Archer, Keeper of the Indian Section, Victoria and Albert Museum, discusses the problems posed by its sudden development and suggests the circumstances which may have prompted certain artists to settle in the State. He relates their work to earlier painting and stresses the supreme part played by the anonymous master. 10 colour plates illustrate some of the finest Garhwal pictures one of which (plate 5) was described in 1948 as 'the loveliest Indian painting ever to be shown in London.'

12s. 6d.
net

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

The Faber Gallery of Oriental Art

A-1
74



GARHWAL PAINTING

with an introduction and notes by

W. G. ARCHER

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

STATE MUSEUM, LUCKNOW
LIBRARY

Acc. No.

Book No.

759.954

12/6
759.95
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

The Faber Gallery of Oriental Art

Entered 22-7-54
Museum Library, Lucknow
विभाग AJ
पुस्तक-क्रम संख्या 74

GARHWAL PAINTING

with an introduction

and notes by

W. G. ARCHER

Faber and Faber Limited

Introduction by W. G. Archer

CC-0. Jangamwadi Math Collection. Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the State of Garhwal[1] in Northern India presents us with a series of intriguing problems. Lying on the south-east fringes of the Punjab Hills, it had for long preserved its feudal independence. Its capital, Srinagar, lay deep into the hills—a week's march from the plains—and although it had nursed a traditional feud with its neighbour, Kumaon, and kept an uneasy watch on the Gurkahs of Nepal, it had, for many years, escaped the havoc of a major war. Its isolation, in fact, was the secret of its quiet, the cause of its freedom and the excuse for its slender cultural achievement. In 1658, a Mughal prince, fleeing from his uncle the emperor Aurangzeb, had brought to Garhwal a Mughal artist and his son. These artists had been as much goldsmiths and courtiers as actual painters and remaining at Garhwal after the prince had left, they had been granted a substantial pension. Their work as artists, however, had been distinctly mediocre and when we come to 1771, the latest representative of the line, a certain Mola Ram, although still painting, was commanding a woefully poor and unimpressive style. Yet despite this lack of fertile antecedents, despite also its general isolation, there matured at Garhwal a style of painting only equalled in romantic charm by that of another Punjab Hill State, Kangra. In place of drab prosaic portraiture, poetry was accepted as the true theme of art. Technique achieved a new delicacy. Passionate romance was treated with innocent grace while line itself was used to express a sense of musical rhythm. For centuries backward and aloof, within a decade Garhwal had made one of the greatest contributions to Indian painting.

This sudden development can only be explained on one assumption—that outside artists had reached the court; and for determining the date of their arrival, we are fortunate in possessing some unusual kinds of evidence—the writings and pictures of the local artist, Mola Ram himself. Although striving to be a painter, Mola Ram (*c.* 1750–1833) was also a poet and collector of pictures. The latter were by several artists but in his collection, as it still existed in 1900, there were a number in similar style, all inscribed in Mola Ram's handwriting and notable for their harshness and crudity.[2] In several cases, verses describe the actual pictures and declare that Mola Ram painted them. None of these pictures shows any sensitivity while in more than one case an exquisite prototype exists which proves that Mola Ram's versions are only clumsy copies.[3] Yet, despite these mediocre accomplishments, so provincial was the Garhwal atmosphere that Mola Ram seems to have rated his productions highly and even to have thought himself a great artist. And it is this circumstance which probably explains his reactions when suddenly there arrived some superior painters. Their presence was clearly very unpalatable and it is significant that in the years 1769 and 1775, he wrote two poems each expressing a sense of bitter disillusion. In the first dated 1769, he wrote 'These are hard times. The officials and courtiers tell lies. Their eyes lie. The clerks lie. The paper lies. The ink lies. Everything is lies', while six years later, he declares 'What are thousands and lakhs?[4] What are gold and villages? Mola Ram cares only for appreciation.' We do not know the exact circumstances in which these poems were written. But it is significant that both were written on pictures[5] and bearing in mind Mola Ram's artistic pretensions, we can hardly doubt that they are related, in some way, to his fate as painter. If outside artists had been welcomed in Garhwal in 1769, the shock to Mola Ram's self-esteem could well explain the first embittered outcry. He would naturally attribute their position not to merit but to flattery, intrigues and 'lies'. He would argue that their success was only transitory and that he, Mola Ram, would triumph in the end. He would hesitate to abandon his current style and hence in 1771, his first fully dated picture[6] still shows only the prosaic dullness of a provincial Mughal manner. If, however, a little later, other artists received encouragement or if the newcomers were now established, not only would Mola Ram be stung to fresh bitterness but he would realise that he must either desist from painting or adopt the new and fashionable technique. And this is precisely what appears to have occurred. In the poem dated 1775, he still pines for appreciation but the picture to which it forms the head-piece[7] is the first of a series in crude but obvious line with the new Garhwal style. Such reactions point to only one conclusion—that certainly by 1775 and probably six to seven years earlier, the new school had come into being.

If this vital migration is assigned to the years 1769 to 1775, from what centre, then, can the artists have come? At first

[1] Pronounced 'Gurr-wal'.

[2] For a preliminary reconstruction of Garhwal painting, see a series of articles by Mukandi Lal, *Roopa-Lekha* (New Delhi), 1929, 1931, 1948–52. Although most modern scholars would probably reject many of Mr. Lal's attributions—particularly those which would identify the Garhwal master as Mola Ram himself—his researches have made a pioneer contribution to problems of painting in the Punjab Hills. For examples of Mola Ram's crude handiwork, each with verse inscriptions in a highly personal hand, see C. D. Guleri, 'A signed Molaram', *Rupam* (Calcutta), Vol. I (2), 1920, pp. 11–14, Mukandi Lal, 'Some Notes on Mola Ram', *Rupam*, Vol. II (8), 1921, fig. 5, 'Garhwal School of Painting (1658–1858)', *Roopa-Lekha*, Vol. XXI (1), fig. 15, Vol. XXII (1), fig. 33, Vol. XXIII, col. pl. 3, p. 40.

[3] Compare, in this connection, O. C. Gangoly, 'The Problem of Mola Ram', *Marg* (Bombay), Vol. IV (4), fig. C. (by Mola Ram) with its prototype from the R. K. Jalan collection, Patna, *The Art of India and Pakistan* (ed. L. Ashton, London, 1950), pl. 111.

[4] 'Hundreds of thousands'.

[5] The first on the back of a later picture, the second on the front of the picture.

[6] *Mastani*, a lady drinking, reproduced Mukandi Lal, 'Garhwal School of Painting (1658–1858)', *Roopa-Lekha* (New Delhi), Vol. XX (2), p. 120. In the verse inscription, heading the picture, Mola Ram declares that he drew this lady—'to amuse himself'—and appends the year, 1771, with month and day.

[7] *The Lady with the Peacock*, reproduced Mukandi Lal, 'Some Notes on Mola Ram', *Rupam*, Vol. II (8), 1921, fig. 4. The original is now in the collection of Mr. J. C. French.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

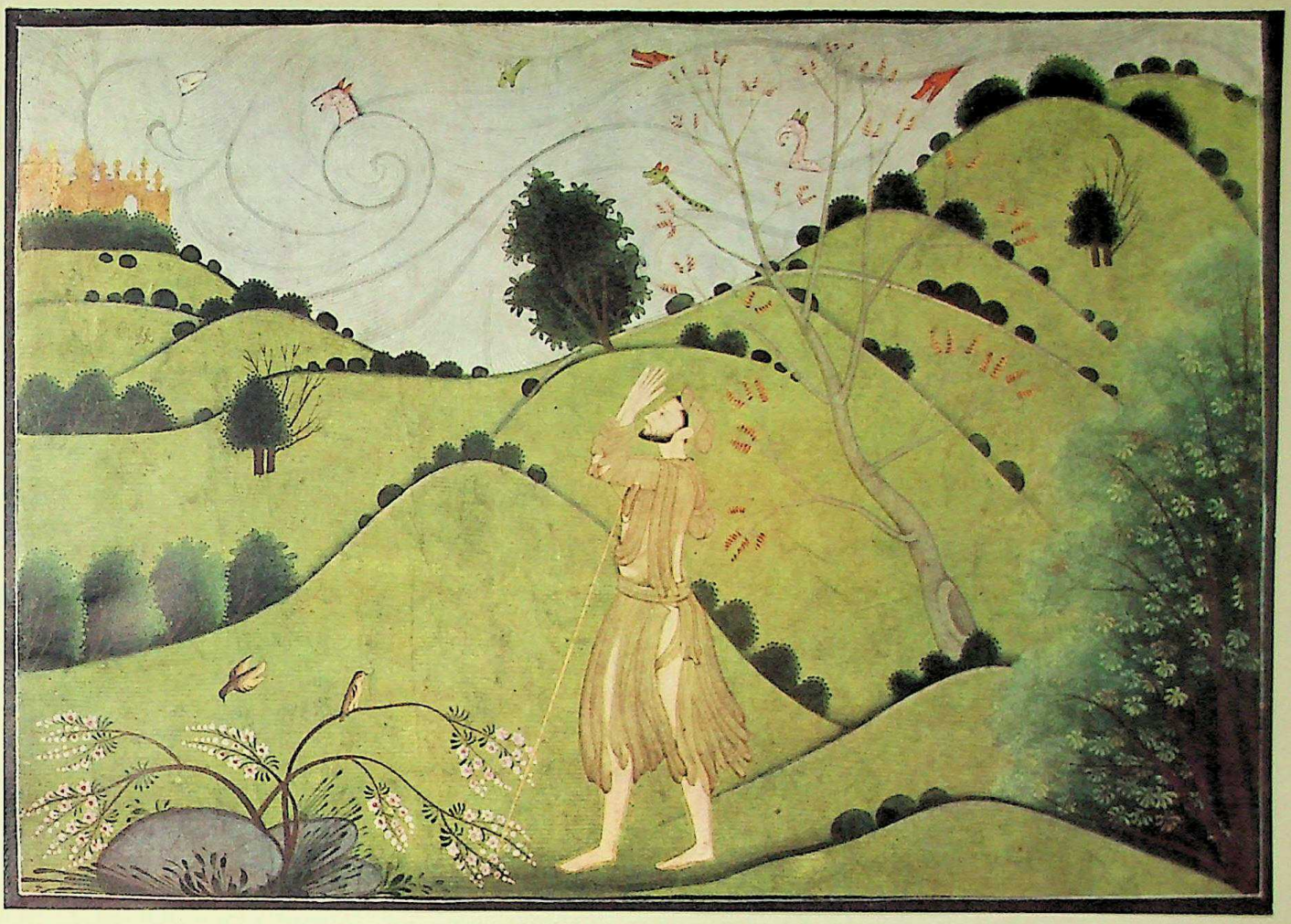


Plate 1. The Road to Krishna. (See page 24)

sight, Kangra itself would certainly appear to be the most likely source.[1] Not only would it explain the prevalence of closely similar idioms but it would also account for the same enraptured treatment of romantic themes. Yet when we consider the theory more closely, some crucial difficulties appear. So far as we know, the great style of Kangra was a sudden development in Kangra itself—as sudden as the new style in Garhwal. Until 1780, there is no evidence that Kangra possessed any painting of this kind and it was the migration to Kangra of outside artists as well as the chance succession of Raja Sansar Chand (ruled 1775–1823), which brought it into being. We cannot date his effective patronage earlier than 1780 for even then he was only fifteen years of age. In fact it was not until 1786 that he had subdued his neighbours and consolidated his position. If, therefore, Garhwal painting was a direct offshoot from Kangra, we must assume, firstly, that it developed after 1780, thereby negativing the evidence we have just discussed and, secondly, that certain artists migrated from Kangra at the very time when Sansar Chand was exerting his strongest patronage. Such a possibility cannot be excluded but it is certainly most unlikely. But perhaps the greatest difficulty in accepting this theory lies in the character of the two styles. When, somewhat later in the nineteenth century, the Kangra style did in fact spread to other centres, the dependence of these provincial offshoots on the parent school is obvious enough. At Garhwal, on the other hand, the style is so authentic and individual that while there is certainly a marked affinity with Kangra art, the sense of any close dependence is wanting. It is rather as parallel developments from the same artistic source that the two styles must be regarded.

If this conclusion is accepted, it would follow that just as artists from the State of Guler migrated to Kangra in about the year 1780, and there produced the Kangra style, a previous migration took some of them to Garhwal ten years earlier. We know that during the reign of Raja Gobardhan Singh of Guler

[1] For a disscusion of Kangra painting and its origin in the art of Guler, a little State lower down the Kangra valley, see W. G. Archer, *Kangra Painting* (London, 1952).

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

(ruled *c.* 1730–73) a process of keen experimentation had been going on. Romantic poetry was being illustrated with fresh delicacy. Ladies were being portrayed with fluid grace, and a quality of tender sensuousness, lacking in certain earlier and more violent products, was steadily emerging. Yet although a new romantic style was in process of development and many novel idioms had appeared, no single manner had been finally adopted. If, therefore, certain artists now went to Garhwal, the change of court could well have precipitated a new coherent style. Equally, if shortly afterwards, other artists went to Kangra, a second, broadly similar style might be expected to result. Each style would have its roots in former Guler practice. Each would closely resemble the other yet each would represent a new artistic trend. And although there is no exact or final proof, a number of circumstances suggest that this is what occurred.

We know that following the death of Raja Gobardhan Singh in 1773, artists at Guler were confronted with a crisis and it is not unlikely that even before his death, patronage had already slackened. If an outside ruler had then invited artists to join him, others might well have broken away. Certainly in the case of Punch, there are grounds for thinking that a Guler artist had left the court at what was clearly a vitally experimental stage.[1] At the same time, Sikh marauders were growing more turbulent and when, in 1783, the traveller Forster entered the Hills at Nahan intending to move by easy stages up to Jammu, he was 'obliged to deviate from the usual track and proceed to the westward', the normal route through Guler 'being overrun by Sikhs'.[2] Such insecurity may well have weighed with certain artists and encouraged them to seek another court. Kangra, though less than forty miles away, was obviously exposed to similar harassments. Its ruler, Raja Ghamand Chand, was powerful but insensitive and if the morale of certain artists had been undermined, a considerably more remote area would strike them as desirable. Garhwal was two hundred miles away, connected only by a mule track through tumbled country and thus its very distance may have lent it a certain enchantment. But it is another, quite simple circumstance which probably explains their choice. Either shortly before or a little after Raja Lalat Shah of Garhwal (ruled 1772–80) came to the throne, a marriage was effected between his son, Raja Pradhuman Shah (ruled 1781–1804) and a Guler princess, the daughter of Ajab Singh, a scion of the Guler royal house. For celebrating the nuptials, a great party left Garhwal for Guler while on the return journey, Guler people went to Garhwal with the bride. Such an occasion, if nothing else, could well have proved decisive. If the princess herself were not a patron, her family may have shared the Guler ruler's interest in art. Patronage by a lady was not impossible, for one of the most famous illustrated copies of the Sanskrit poem, the *Gita Govinda*, was commissioned by a princess of Basohli, the lady Manaku. Even in the palaces themselves, it was often the court ladies who busied themselves with pictures, taking them out of their cloth bundles and beguiling the hours by turning over their pages. It is not improbable, then, that certain Guler artists attached themselves to the wedding party and remained at Garhwal when the rest of the party had returned. If, as is equally possible, one or two had gone there somewhat earlier, the wedding would have strengthened the minds of waverers and provided them with an added inducement to move. In the light of all these circumstances and recalling the marked affinities of Garhwal pictures with those of Kangra and Guler, only one conclusion seems possible—that it was Guler artists who went to Garhwal and despite the jealousies of Mola Ram, achieved a dominant position.[3]

The paintings which from now onwards were to lend such distinction to the Garhwal court can be divided into two distinct groups. The first consists of less than twenty exquisite creations and is clearly the work of an outstanding master-artist. It is inconceivable that these are all the pictures he produced but due to subsequent mishaps, they are all that have survived. We do not know his name but judging by certain changes of manner, his work had three successive phases. The first, represented by plates 2 and 3, reveals his initial reactions to the Garhwal setting. The style with its lyrical delicacy is obviously a product of Guler experiments but important novelties are already visible. Facial features are rendered in a manner closely similar to a Guler formula but with a new inflection. Colour is more powerful—strong blues and reds alternating with deep blacks and greens. Indeed it is as if the very circumstance of migration had stirred his sensibility and evoked a sudden leap in style. In one respect, a special artistic influence can be detected. In the *Encounter at the Pool* (pl. 3), the great empty hillside, the tiny city on the far horizon and even the deep intense blue can all be paralleled in Punch offshoots of the Guler manner[4] while in the *Lady at the Tryst* (pl. 2), the sharply formal setting, the wriggling lightning and the sharp cut of the veil betray the same artistic source.[5] Yet the total style is quite unlike Punch painting and we can only conclude that at some time the artist had obtained access to pictures in the Guler-Punch manner and availed himself of some of their idioms. The influence was to remain of some importance for even in a slightly later picture (pl. 5), the composition is modelled on a Punch prototype.[6]

The second phase is marked by a different characteristic—a new emotional response to landscape. Trees with leafless branches are drawn with the same sinuous delicacy with which Guler artists had transcribed the female body. Foliage is rendered with sensitive subtlety while the structure of trees is so interpreted as to bring out to the full their formal

[1] For a tentative reconstruction of this artist's influence at Punch, see W. G. Archer, *Indian Painting in the Punjab Hills* (London, 1952), pp. 71–84. The dates of Figs. 58–61, 66, 69 and 70 should, however, be advanced to *c.* 1765 and that of Fig. 65, to *c.* 1760.

[2] G. Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England* (London, 1798), Vol. I, p. 209.

[3] For discussions of Guler painting, see W. G. Archer, *Kangra Painting*, pp. 2–3, and *Indian Painting in the Punjab Hills*, pp. 17–44.

[4] Compare *Indian Painting in the Punjab Hills*, fig. 70.

[5] *Ibid.*, figs. 66 and 69.

[6] Compare *ibid.*, fig. 59.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

character. At the same time, feminine figures seem imbued with even lighter grace. Delicacy in Nature echoes delicacy in woman and whether the subject is lovers in a moon-lit retreat (pl. 4) or a lady hastening through the night (pl. 5), the images of nature are all employed to interpret and enhance a passionate scene.

The third and final phase shows yet another variant. A mood of lyrical exaltation continues to be expressed but an idiom local to Garhwal becomes its means of communication. It would seem that besides responding to the trees and hillsides at the capital, the master-artist was also stirred by the spiralling eddies of the great Alaknanda river which during the Rains rushed through the valley of Srinagar, spending itself against the two hillocks, Nar and Narain, which jutted into the stream. The play of water, with its melody of line, seems to have specially fascinated him, and as a result he now developed a strain of linear incantation, deliberately simplifying his treatment of hillsides and imposing on his subjects a single twining rhythm. In the great *Quelling of Kaliya*[1], the eddies in the water curl and re-curl, trees and flowers echo the bending forms while even the hills, as in the *Road to Krishna* (pl. 1) contribute to a general cadence.

The second group of Garhwal pictures is obviously the work of lesser artists. We do not know how many were engaged but it is possible that at least a dozen were at work at different times. Some were obviously unsophisticated as is shown by the survival in certain pictures of primitive Guler conventions.[2] Others may well have approached the master in delicate sensitivity. All were certainly influenced by his general example. The use of leafless branches to parallel the feminine form, the insertion into landscape of little globe-like trees, a predilection for towering spikes of starry flowers, the idiom of swirling water—these are only a few of his inventions which came to characterise the common style.

For almost thirty years, painting in this manner continued to flourish. Peace, however, was a vital necessity and with the commencement of the nineteenth century, this was rudely shattered. A strain of weakness had characterised both Raja Pradhuman Shah and his father Raja Lalat. Neither was strongly martial and Hardwicke who visited Pradhuman in 1796 described him as 'in stature something under middle size, of slender make, regular in features but effeminate'.[3] Such qualities would be of little use in battle and it is hardly surprising that when, in 1803, the Gurkhas invaded Garhwal, Pradhuman was quite unequal to the test. Harried by gloomy predictions and unnerved by an earthquake which only a year previously had wrecked Srinagar and shattered his palace, he hurriedly mustered an army—only to be utterly routed early in 1804. Of his immediate entourage, his son, Sudarshan Shah, escaped to British territory while his brother, Parakram, took refuge with Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra. Pradhuman himself, however, was killed and with him almost all his court.

For Garhwal painting, the defeat was cataclysmic. As newcomers, the artists had depended wholly on the court and with its hurried evacuation their means of livelihood vanished. The Gurkhas who succeeded were the reverse of sensitive. Indeed the regime which now ensued so seared the country that it can only be compared with that of Cromwell in Ireland. 'The Goorkhas' wrote Fraser in 1816 'have ruled in Gurwhal for nearly twelve years and appear to have borne in mind the trouble it cost them to win it and acted as if determined to revenge it. Its old families were destroyed; all those persons of rank and importance who were taken were murdered or banished, its villages burnt and desolated and great numbers of its inhabitants sold as slaves. The remaining part were oppressed by heavy taxes and many voluntary banishments and emigrations took place to avoid a tyranny they could not withstand'.[4]

In such circumstances, the artists must almost certainly have abandoned the capital. If, as seems likely, they left with the court, some may well have been killed in the massacre of the next year. The survivors may possibly have returned to Guler, sought employment in the neighbouring State of Sirmur or even gone to Kangra with Pradhuman's brother. In Srinagar itself, only the local artist, Mola Ram, seems to have remained. His house and lands were in the State. In 1780 he had intrigued with Pradhuman's short-lived predecessor, Jayakrit Shah (1780–81) and thus had permanently forfeited the ruler's favour. He had clearly nothing to lose and perhaps something to gain by quietly awaiting events. And in the result his prudence was rewarded. The Gurkha governors at the capital stood in marked contrast to the ruffians who terrorised the countryside. The Gurkha governor, Hastidal, accepted his companionship and for some years Mola Ram was a regular attendant at his house. Such painting as he now produced had the same harsh crudity as his earlier pictures but it is possible that profiting from the general confusion he obtained from other collections some of the Garhwal master's paintings. When, in 1816, Garhwal was liberated by British forces, Mola Ram and his family continued to play the same sagacious role. His son, Jwala Ram, became a clerk to the British Commissioner and having adopted the British technique, executed a series of topographical studies and some pictures of birds. As late as 1877 five artists, three of them descendants of Mola Ram, were still at work in the bazaar, aping with pathetic poverty the glories of the previous tradition.

It was only in the portion of Garhwal known as Tehri that painting underwent a creative revival. With the expulsion of the Gurkhas, Sudarshan Shah (ruled 1816–59) was restored to the throne but given only this wilder and more northerly area. He was able, however, to make certain economies for with the British on his flank he could now dispense with feudal

[1] Reproduced A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Rajput Painting* (Oxford, 1916), Vol. II, pl. 53 (colour); Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India* (London, 1953), pl. 133 (monochrome).

[2] For one of these primitive conventions, see the striped carpet in pl. 9. Another early Guler device—the use of flat red surfaces—appears in the red borders of *Radha bathing* (pl. 8).

[3] Captain Thomas Hardwicke, 'Narrative of a Journey to Sirinagur', *Asiatick Researches*, Vol. VI (1797), p. 333.

[4] J. B. Fraser, *Journal of a Tour through part of the Himala Mountains* (London, 1820), p. 384.

[continued on page 24

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Plate 2

THE LADY AT THE TRYST

Garhwal, *c.* 1775

Size: $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

(P. C. Manuk and Miss G. M. Coles bequest, P.D. 126–1948)

From the fourteenth century onwards, Indian poetry had concentrated on the moods and actions of *nayakas* and *nayikas*—the ideal lovers whose conduct embodied the very essence of romance. Moral restrictions were deemed to be lifted, lovers and their ladies were free to follow their hearts while every nuance of passionate sentiment was described with sensitive zest. It was by expressing in poetry such romantic longings that Indian feudal society maintained its moral code.

The present picture portrays an *utka nayika*—the girl who having reached the tryst prepares a bed of leaves and then stands waiting for her lover. Darkness hems her in while lightning, flickering in the sky, gives warning of storm. It is other meanings, however, which invest the picture with poetic charm. Echoing the girl's grave beauty, the lightning also reflects her agitation, its restless presence hinting at the frenzy beneath her tranquil poise. In Indian poetry, a girl's face was often described as 'lovely as the lightning' while the play of lightning on cloud was a common symbol for the union of lovers.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Plate 3

THE ENCOUNTER AT THE POOL

Illustration to the Hindu religious epic, the *Ramayana*

Garhwal, *c.* 1775

Size: $9\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$ in.

British Museum

(Purchased from J. C. French, Esq., 1923, O.A. 1923–7–28–01)

During his exile from Ayodhya, Rama, his consort, Sita and brother, Lakshman, were besought by hermits to settle near them in the forest. As they proceeded, they reached a pool from which could be heard the sounds of singing though the singers themselves were quite invisible. The voices, they were told, came from five *apsaras*—the celestial enchantresses whose role was to charm both gods and men. For ten thousand years a sage had practised austerities till the gods had grown alarmed lest he should shortly achieve their own unique state. Five beauties were therefore dispatched to wean him from his purpose. Their girlish charms so aroused his passions that he renounced his spiritual ambitions and installed them as his wives. The pool was where the ascetic and the girls now lived together.

In the picture, the master-artist has illustrated the incident by actually depicting the five girls. The fingers of two are raised as if directing the singing while another is clapping her hands as if in time. The pool is suggested by the white stonework, heading a flight of steps, while its presence is further implied by the pitchers of water which three of them are carrying. With its tall slim figures—the essence of stately grace—its air of charmed stillness and sudden electric fascination, the picture is one of the most subtle interpretations by a Garhwal artist of the mystery of romance.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Plate 4

LOVERS IN A MOON-LIT RETREAT

Garhwal, *c.* 1780

Size: 10½ × 7 in.

Kasturbhai Lalbhai Collection, Ahmadabad

In the middle of the sixteenth century, Baz Bahadur, the last Muhammadan ruler of Malwa in central India, became enamoured of Rupmati, a Hindu courtesan. Entranced, they would ride together at night, gazing into each other's eyes. Their love lasted seven years—to be ended with the defeat of Baz Bahadur by a Mughal army and the subsequent capture and suicide of Rupmati. Transcending as it did the ordinary rules of Rajput society, their love-making came gradually to acquire an ideal character, satisfying by its very remoteness from accepted conduct the Rajput feeling for passionate romance.

In the picture, the lovers are resting on a hillside, their horses tethered in a copse while a young moon shows amid the stars. Rupmati is sleeping while Baz Bahadur still gazes at her eyes. Above her stretch the triple trunks of a tree—the leafless branches echoing with their sinuous curves her graceful lines. Beyond the hillside are two leopards, suggesting by their close encounter the ferocious nature of the lovers' feelings.[1] Over the entire scene broods the entranced stillness of a summer night.

[1] For a parallel in early Indian literature, compare a Sanskrit poem of the fifth century (trans. E. Powys Mathers, *Love Songs of Asia* (London, 1944), p. 2):

Very afraid
I saw the dalliance of the leopards
In the beauty of their coats
They sought each other and embraced
Had I gone between them then
And pulled them asunder by their manes
I would have run less risk
Then when I saw you . . .
Ready to dive and kindle the river.

For further instances of the same symbol, see W. G. Archer, *The Dove and the Leopard* (Longmans, London and Calcutta, 1947).

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Plate 5

A NIGHT OF STORM

A lady, *abhisarika nayika*, going through the dark to meet her lover.

Garhwal, *c.* 1780

Size: $8\frac{3}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ in.

British Museum

(P. C. Manuk and Miss G. M. Coles bequest, O.A. 1948–10–9–0138)

As in many Kangra paintings, all the images in this picture are drawn from poetry and are inserted for precise symbolic ends. Frail lightning echoes the girl's beauty. Flowering creepers repeat the droop and pattern of her dress while birds, motionless in the rainy darkness, parallel her poise and calm. It is the pouring rain and the twin cobras, however, which sustain the vital roles. The rain is a discomfort which the girl must silently endure and a symbol of her goal—the passionate encounter with her lover to whom she speeds.

'Take me to a country that I have never seen,
Where, O my love, the thunder roars,
Where, O my love, the lightning flickers,
And the rain pours down'.[1]

—rain, storm and lightning all symbolising the climax of desire.

In a similar way, the two snakes have varied functions. Suggestive of danger and the lover, the cobra, slithering to its mate, also enacts the girl proceeding to the tryst. Its undulations mimic her young curves and trailing dress, while lines such as

'Lying on their bed the two embrace
The girl is lovely as a cobra'[2]
'A snake shines like lightning in the stream'[3]
'Your body is soft and lustrous as a snake'[4]

show how the image was also intended to stress the girl's charm. It was by accepting this variety of meanings and welding them into a single harmony that the Garhwal master-artist revealed his stature.

[1] Verrier Elwin, *The Baiga* (London, 1933), p. 447.
[2] Verrier Elwin and Shamrao Hivale, *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills* (O.U.P., Bombay, 1944), p. 152.
[3] Verrier Elwin and Shamrao Hivale, *Songs of the Forest* (London, 1935), p. 74.
[4] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, p. 124. For further examples of the cobra symbol, see W. G. Archer, *The Blue Grove* (London, 1940).

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Plate 6

SUDAMA'S HOVEL

Illustration to the story of Krishna and Sudama, an episode in the *Bhagavata Purana*

Garhwal, *c.* 1785

Size: 11 × 8 in.

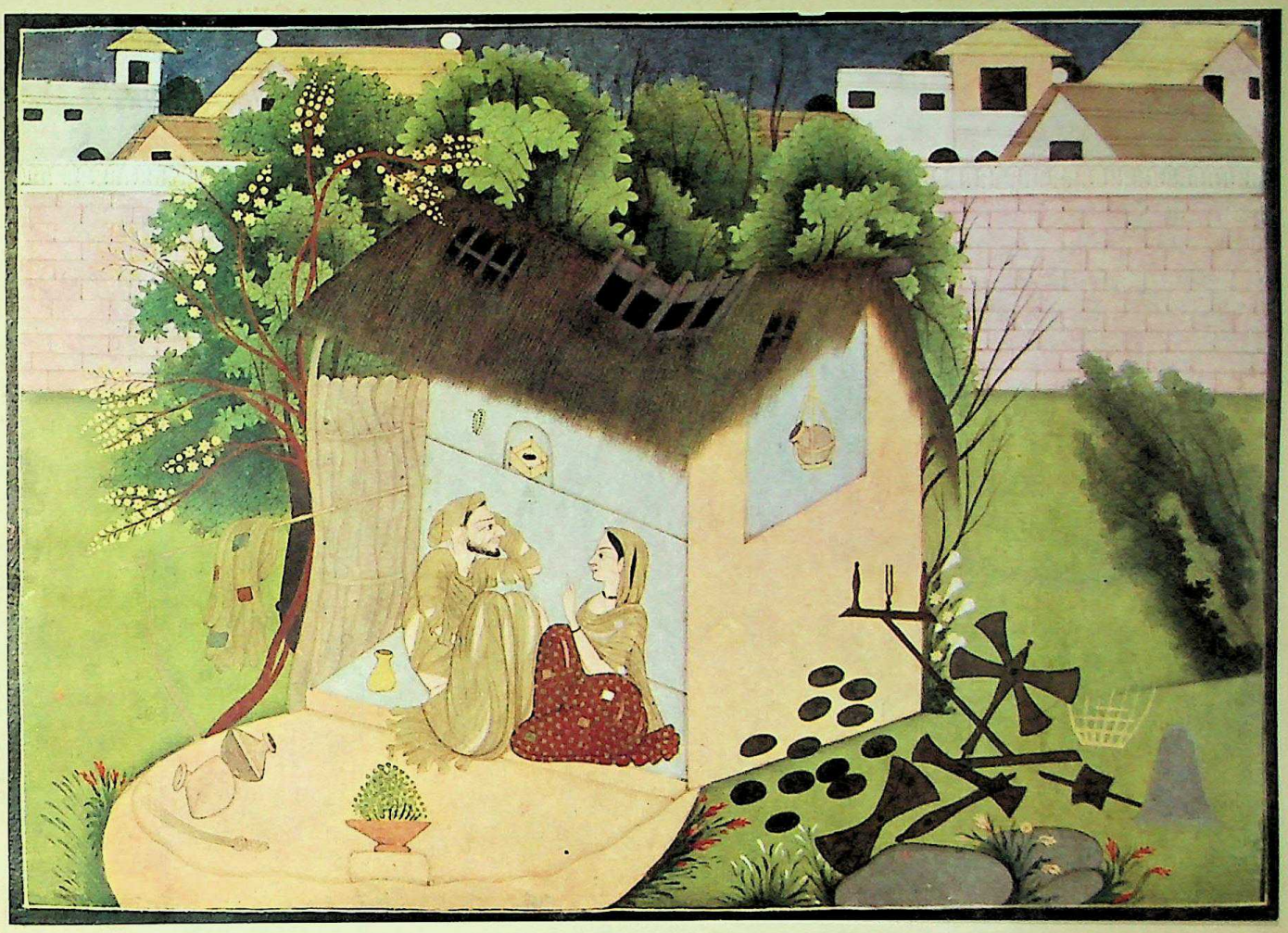
Victoria and Albert Museum

(Purchased from the Eric Dickinson Collection, 1952, I.S. 545–1952)

Faced with ever increasing poverty, the Brahman, Sudama, was urged by his wife to go to Dwarka, the golden city, and visit Krishna, his former friend. At first recoiling from the task, he at length set out, taking with him as offering a handful of rice. On his arrival, Krishna washed his feet, smilingly took the gift, plied him with delicacies, and at last, with tender care, placed him on a bed. Too abashed to ask for help, Sudama left next day and made for home. As he neared his hut, he saw that the hovel had become a golden palace and realised that his poverty had suddenly ended.

In the picture, Sudama is listening to his wife's entreaties, half-scandalised at what she proposes. Around them are littered the pathetic symbols of their plight—cow-dung cakes drying on the wall, empty pitchers, a broken spinning-wheel and basket, datura weeds springing from the soil and the roof, a gaping thatch.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Plate 7

GIRLS SWIMMING

Illustration to the Indian musical mode, *Sindhuri Ragini*

Garhwal, *c.* 1790

Size: 9 × 6¼ in.

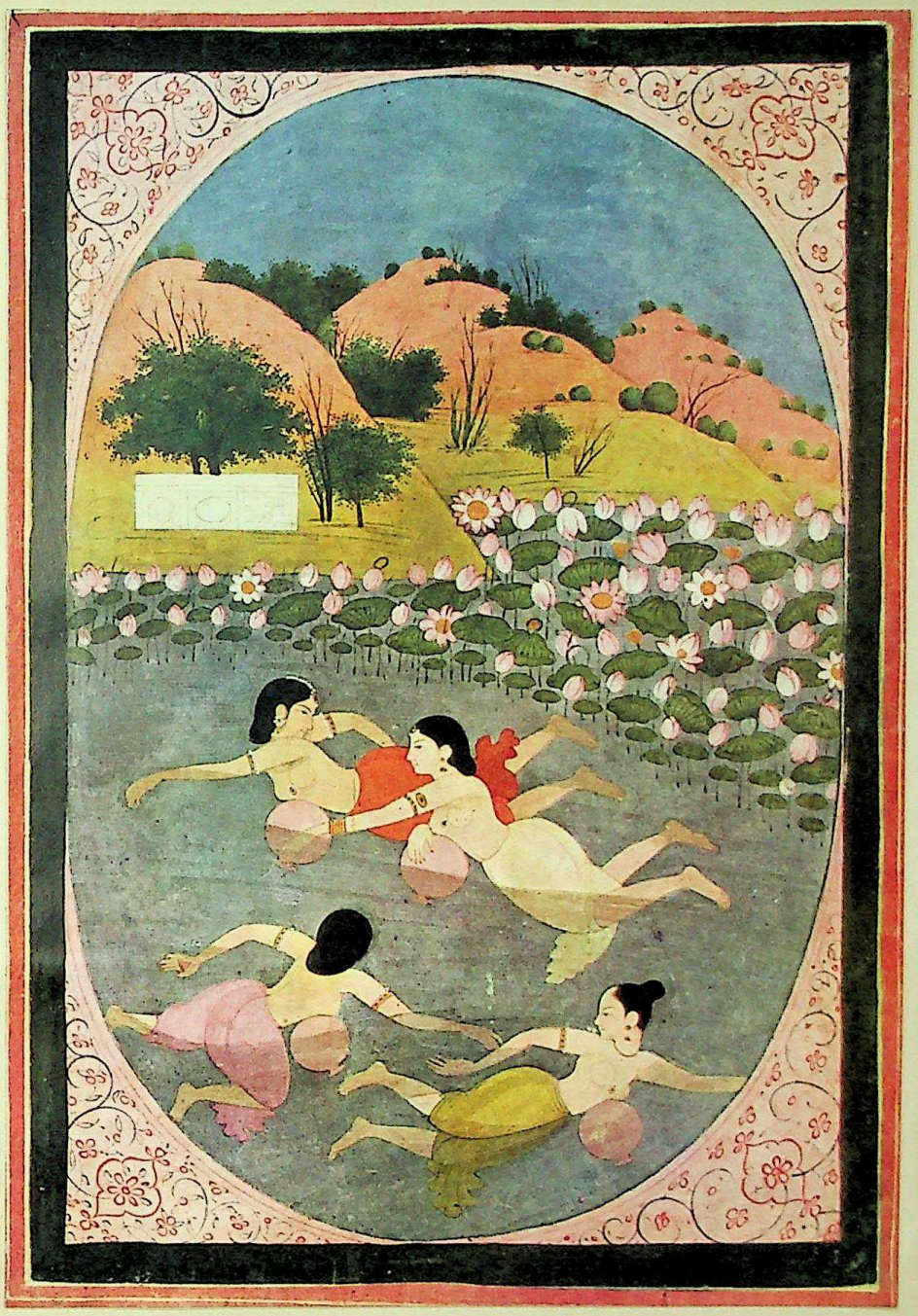
Ram Gopal Collection, London

During the sixteenth century, *ragas* and *raginis*—the conventional modes of Indian music—began to be intimately associated with poetry and painting. Each *raga* was visualised either as a god or a prince, its five *raginis* being treated as ladies or queens. Poems were then written describing their accomplishments and attributing to them particular emotional attitudes or special kinds of behaviour. In the pictures which came to accompany the verses, these 'musical princes' and their ladies were portrayed either in typical postures or through scenes suggestive of their character. In most systems of Northern India, six *ragas*, each with five ladies, made up a total of thirty-six. In the Punjab Hills, on the other hand, beginning in Basohli and thence spreading via Guler to Garhwal, a more extended system was the rule—each *raga* having eight sons in addition to his five *raginis*, the total number of pictures in a set being eighty-four.

In the present picture, the character of Sindhuri Ragini, a lady of Hindola Raga (the 'swinging' music) is suggested by a party of girls swimming in a lotus-pond. The floats which sustain them are empty upturned pitchers, plugged with straw—a device still used in Northern India. It was the unwitting use of an unfired pitcher which caused disaster in the famous tale of Sohni and Mahinwal—the Hero and Leander of Indian legend.[1]

[1] For a Guler picture, *c.* 1765, of Sohni swimming to Mahinwal, see O. C. Gangoly, *Masterpieces of Rajput Painting* (Calcutta, 1926), plate 29. For a summary of the story, see A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Rajput Painting* (Oxford, 1916), Vol. I, p. 64.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Plate 8

RADHA BATHING

Garhwal, *c.* 1785

Size: $7\frac{5}{8} \times 5\frac{5}{8}$ in.

Victoria and Albert Museum

(Purchased from Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1914, I.M. 158–1914)

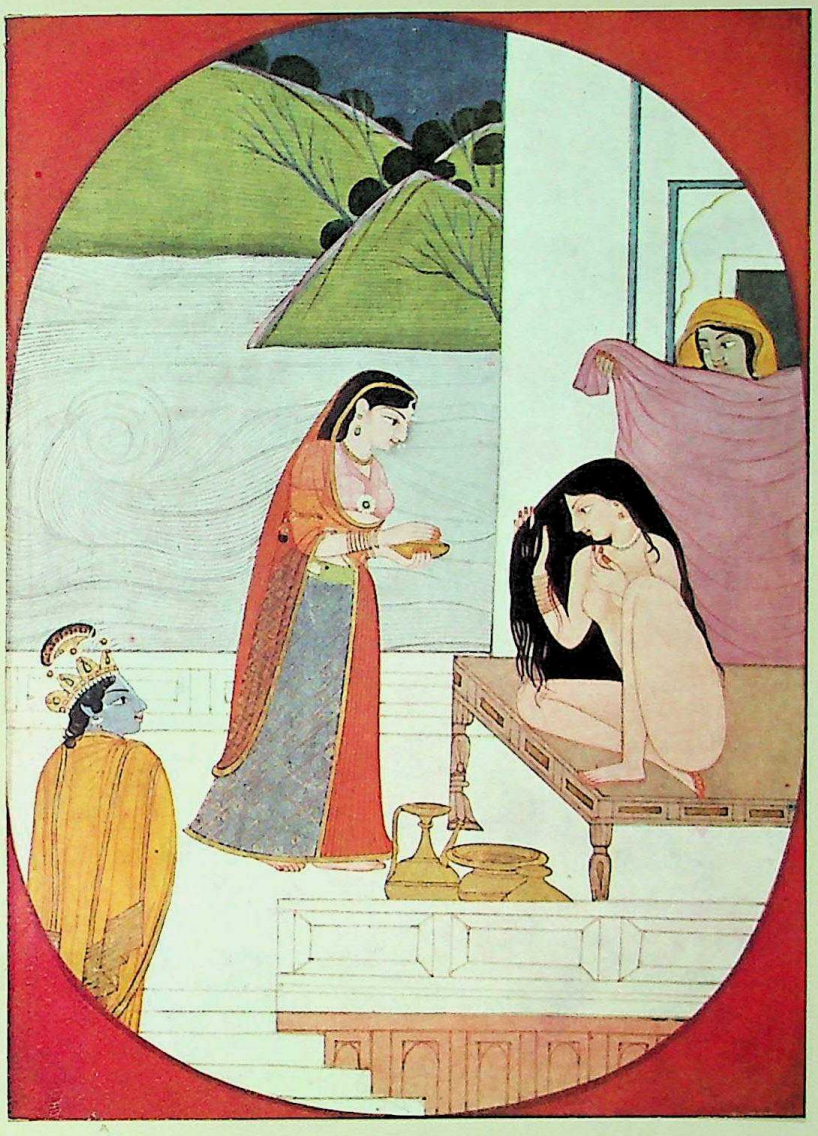
In Garhwal, as elsewhere in the Punjab Hills, the romance of Radha and Krishna fascinated the Rajput nobility with its insistence on love as a passion and its basic doctrine of devotion to God. Krishna, an embodiment of Vishnu, had lived among the cowherds and cowgirls of Northern India, exciting their adoration by his love, friendship and idyllic charms. While Radha, Krishna's principal love, is not mentioned in the *Bhagavata Purana*, a Sanskrit text of about the tenth century (A.D.) she is the leading figure in the *Gita Govinda*, a Sanskrit poem by Jayadeva two centuries later.

In this greatest of love poems, George Keyt has said, 'the physical aspect is not something distinct from the spiritual nor is it parallel to the sort of love that is sexual in the manner of the Ars Amatoria. On the contrary there is the endowment of the physical side with the real and enduring qualities of the spiritual. Nothing is trivial. The most fugitive emotion in love is important'. And he goes on to stress 'any little gesture or physical sensation, the relationship and association of the surroundings, the hours and seasons and the bodily adornments'.[1]

In the picture, Radha is bathing while Krishna watches her in rapture. The scene with its innocent dignity has been given a Garhwal setting just as in Western art characters from the Bible were portrayed in Flemish costume or against Italian backgrounds. The river is the Alaknanda which flowed past Srinagar the capital and the hillocks are the two hills, Nar and Narain, which jutted into the stream. The red border is a survival of an early Guler convention—the hot flaming colour symbolising passion. Although by a considerably lesser artist than the Garhwal master, the picture includes a characteristic detail in the linear treatment of water.

[1] George Keyt, *Shri Jayadeva's Gita Govinda* (Bombay, 1947), p. 9.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Plate 9

KRISHNA SPURNED BY RADHA

Garhwal, *c.* 1780

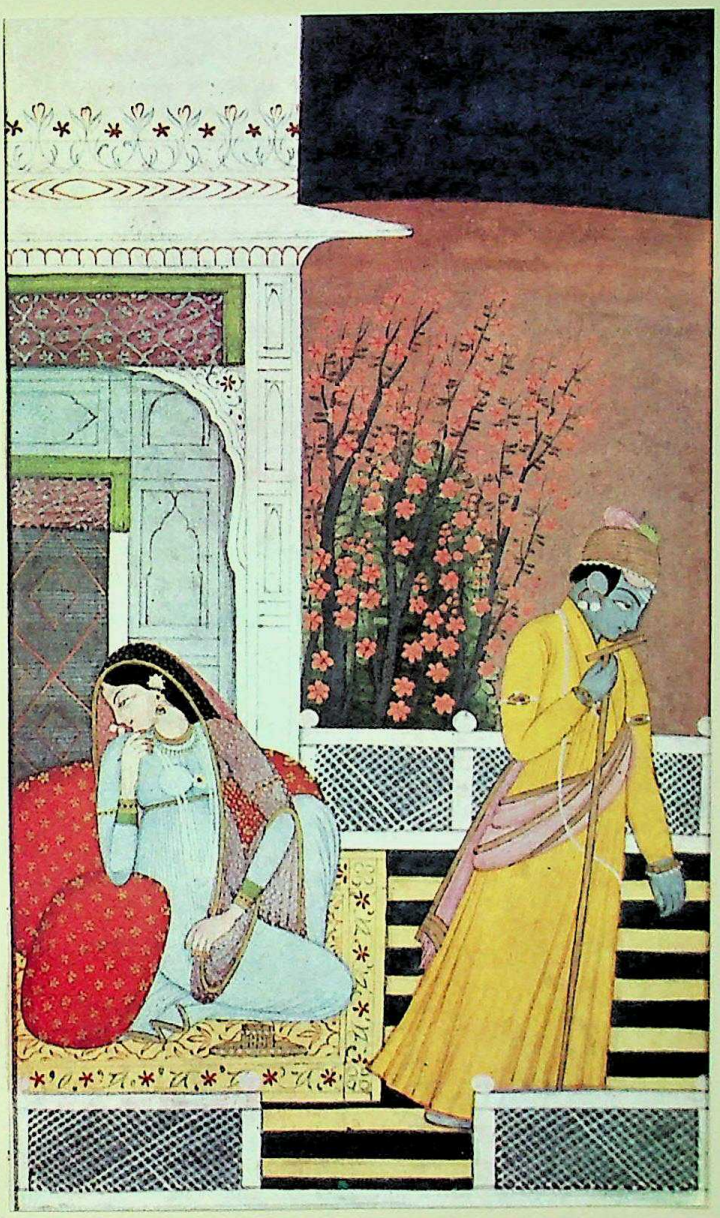
Size: 8 × $4\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Victoria and Albert Museum (I.S. 276–1951)

Despite his love for Radha, Krishna was also attentive to the cow-girls, dancing with them in the forest and sharing their ecstatic embraces. Hurt by this callous behaviour, Radha wilts in lonely neglect. At last Krishna goes to seek her, only to find her bitter and aggrieved. She will now have none of him and he retires, stunned and ashamed.

In the picture, Radha, lovely as the clustering flowers which rise above her, droops sick at heart while Krishna stricken with remorse moves slowly away. The style is typical of Garhwal painting as practised by one of the master-artist's minor associates.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Plate 10

RADHA AND KRISHNA

Garhwal, *c.* 1820

Size: $9\frac{3}{8} \times 11\frac{3}{4}$ in.

W. G. Archer collection, Oxford

After the lovers' quarrel illustrated on Plate 9, Krishna begs Radha's forgiveness.

'O you with beautiful teeth, if you are in anger against me, strike me then with your finger nails, sharp and like arrows,

Bind me, entwining, with the cords of your arms, and bite me then with your teeth, and feel happy punishing.

O loved one, O beautiful, give up that baseless pride against me.

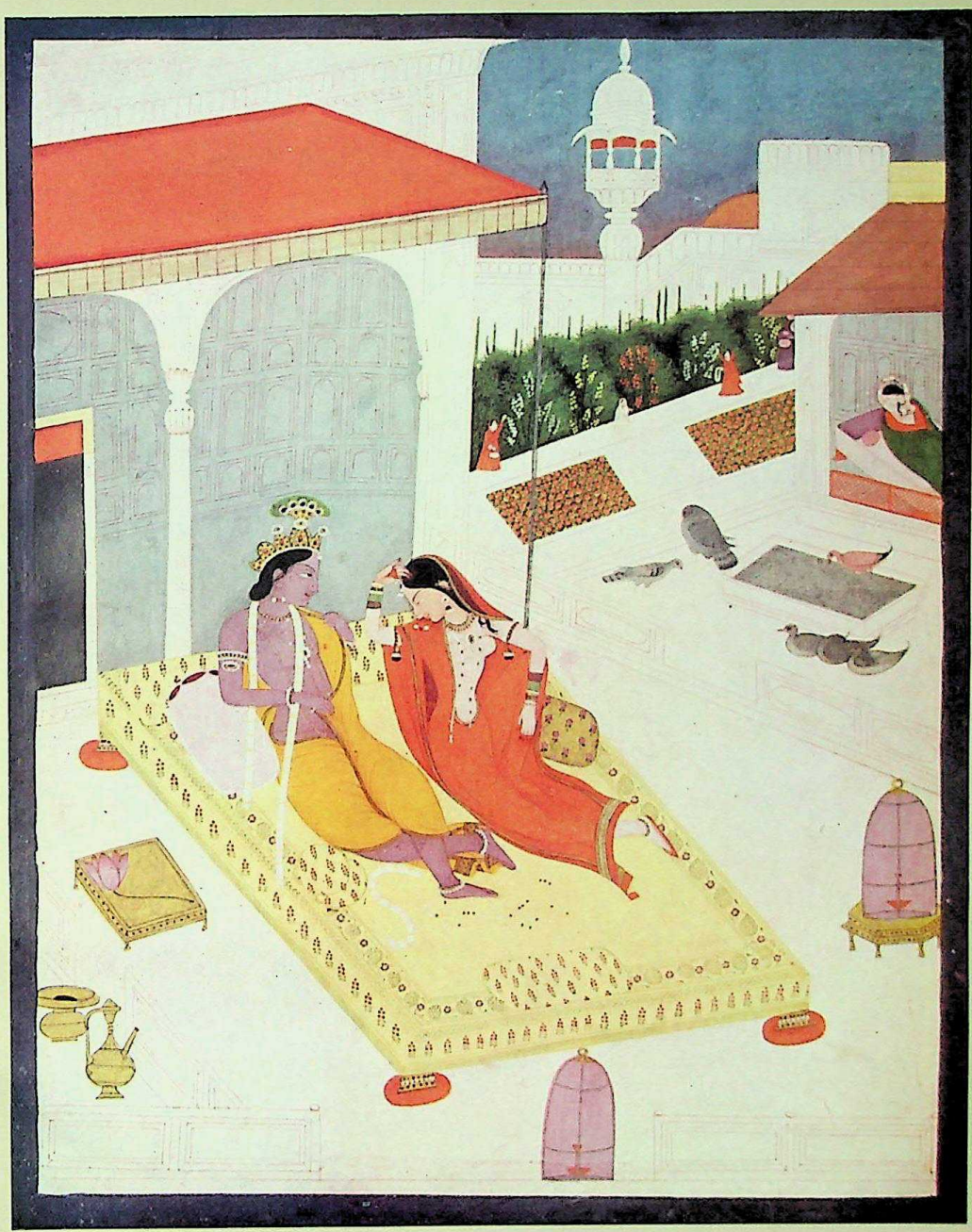
My heart is burnt by the fire of longing; give me that drink so sweet of your lotus face'.[1]

Their reconciliation follows and the poem ends on a note of joy.

In the picture, dawn has come, the sun shows above the walls, women pick flowers for garlands, while in the centre, Krishna gazes at Radha, exquisite with her fragile form.

[1] George Keyt, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



continuea from Page 5]
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

armies. His capital was a mere village and it was only by careful management that a show of wealth returned. Despite such unpromising conditions, Sudarshan Shah seems none the less to have patronised the arts and indeed it is probably with the period 1816 to 1825 that we must connect the work of a certain artist, Chaitu Sah. Chaitu's style with its sparse settings and airy whiteness has, at first sight, little in common with the first great phase of Garhwal art and it is possible that while adopting certain local idioms such as the familiar leafless tree, it was from later Guler tradition that he obtained his general technique.[1] It is probable that from 1790 onwards Guler painting had been dominated by its Kangra offshoot till, during the critical years, 1806–10, when Sansar Chand was himself harried by the Gurkhas, certain Kangra artists may have congregated at the Guler court. Besides Chaitu, one or two other artists were probably at Tehri at this time and it may well be that they were either former painters who had fled from Garhwal in 1803 or members of their families. It is certainly from Guler and Kangra sources that later painting at Tehri derives its chief manner—a further influence occurring in 1829 when the Kangra ruler, Raja Anirodh Chand, fled for safety to the court. With him came his two sisters, part of his father's great collection of pictures and almost certainly some Kangra painters. The two princesses were wedded to Sudarshan Shah, a number of pictures were included in the dowry and a group of artists were provided with employment. As a consequence, from 1830 until the third quarter of the nineteenth century, there flourished in Tehri a school of late Kangra painting. Its style had none of the brooding glamour of the early Garhwal school but if the *Glory of Spring*, reproduced by Mr. N. C. Mehta,[2] is typical of its productions, it had still a fresh poetic delicacy and a clear idyllic charm. It is with such pictures, fugitive in their prettiness, that the curtain falls.

Garhwal painting has never had the same prestige as that of Kangra. Its fame was local. Its style had few, if any, offshoots. Even in terms of time, its exquisite flowering was limited to a bare thirty years and was overlaid a little later by pictures more typical of Kangra than of Garhwal itself. Yet in sheer poetic intensity its masterpieces were never surpassed. Products of Indian feudalism, before the Rajput order foundered, they gave enchanted expression to the common culture of the Punjab Hills—reflecting not merely the local interests of a minor court, but some of the keenest perceptions of the Indian mind. With its cultivation of ideal beauty, its fusion of religion and romance, its blending of poetry and passion, Garhwal painting rivals the art of Kangra as the supreme embodiment in painting of Indian attitudes to love.

[1] For examples of Chaitu's work, see N. C. Mehta, *Studies in Indian Painting* (Bombay, 1926), plates 18–20.

[2] *Ibid.*, plate 55.

Note on Plate 1

THE ROAD TO KRISHNA

Illustration to the story of Krishna and Sudama, an episode in the *Bhagavata Purana*

Garhwal, *c.* 1785

Size: 8 × $5\frac{5}{8}$ in.

Victoria and Albert Museum

(Purchased from the Eric Dickinson Collection, 1952, I.S. 546–1952)

Sudama, the pious Brahman, whose wife has urged him to visit Krishna (see plate 6) is here shown journeying to Dwarka, the golden city. His tattered clothes bespeak his plight while his wife's small offering, knotted in a cloth, dangles at his shoulder. In the top left-hand corner is the golden city while the sea, filled with fabulous monsters, races above the hills. Sighting for the first time Krishna's palace, Sudama lifts his hands in reverent joy.

With its swaying branches, swirling water and rounded hills, the picture has the supreme delicacy and linear music which characterised the Garhwal master's final phase.

First published in mcmliv by Faber and Faber Limited, 24 Russell Square, London, W.C.1.
Text pages printed by Mardon, Son and Hall, Ltd., Bristol. Colour blocks made and printed by Fine Art Engravers, Esher.
All rights reserved.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

THE FABER GALLERY OF ORIENTAL ART

Also by W. G. ARCHER

KANGRA PAINTING

with introduction, notes and 10 plates in colour

'This charming book.'
—*Time and Tide.*

'Mr. Archer is the first to bring into so small a compass the fascinating details of the complicated story.'
—*Times Literary Supplement.*

'Mr. Archer's introduction is a model of its kind.'
—*The Statesman, Calcutta.*

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

The Faber Gallery of Oriental Art

with an introduction and notes by the author named

RAJPUT PAINTING—BASIL GRAY

MUGHAL PAINTING—J. V. S. WILKINSON

BYZANTINE PAINTING—GERVASE MATHEW

PERSIAN PAINTING OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY—DOUGLAS BARRETT

JAPANESE COLOUR PRINTS—WILFRID BLUNT
from Harunobu to Utamaro

CHINESE PAINTING—CHIANG YEE

KANGRA PAINTING—W. G. ARCHER

GARHWAL PAINTING—W. G. ARCHER

other titles to follow

JAPANESE SCREEN PAINTING—BASIL GRAY

BUDDHIST PAINTING

Faber and Faber Limited
24 Russell Square, London W.C. 1

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh